

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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Oct. 30, 2007

1. Adult Zebra Mussels Found on Boat at Lake Rathbun [electronic photos available]
2. For Iowa's Archery Deer Hunters – The Best of the Best Has Arrived – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photos available]

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ADULT ZEBRA MUSSELS FOUND ON BOAT AT LAKE RATHBUN

MORAVIA – An estimated 100 adult zebra mussels were discovered on a cabin cruiser last Friday that had been moored at a marina on Lake Rathbun since late June. State officials stress that it is too early to tell if the exotic mussel has established a foothold in the 11,000 acre reservoir, but they are taking appropriate precautions.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be monitoring the marina and other areas around the lake over the next few years looking for the presence of juvenile zebra mussels, called veligers.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels in Iowa. Signs are posted at public accesses to identify infested waters. The DNR will be working with the US Army Corps of Engineers to place signs alerting boaters of the potential presence of zebra mussels in Lake Rathbun and to help stop the spread of other aquatic nuisance species.

“We cannot allow the careless behavior by a few individuals and businesses to permanently impact a resource used by 800,000 visitors. If these zebra mussels become established here, there is no permanent fix, we will have to learn how to live with this changed ecosystem,” said Richard Leopold, director of the Iowa DNR. “We are looking at any and all enforcement options. Ignorance and carelessness is not an excuse.”

The discovery has alarmed local, state and federal officials who rely on the south central Iowa reservoir to provide drinking water, water for an important fish hatchery, fishing, boating and other recreation. Lake Rathbun generates millions of dollars for the local economy and is the site of the \$50 million Honey Creek Resort State Park.

Zebra mussels grow to only two or three inches at the largest and live for up to three years. They can spawn within the first year of life and each mussel can produce up to 1 million young and spawn multiple times per year.

Zebra mussels are filter feeders and directly compete with native species, including mussels and fish fry. Zebra mussels adhere to hard objects and once attached, they usually stay for life. If the densities are high enough, they can smother native mussels by attaching to their shells and can out compete native filter feeding organisms.

Lake Rathbun provides water for the Rathbun Regional Water Association which serves an estimated 70,000 people in southern Iowa and northern Missouri. Zebra mussels can impact water supplies by clogging water intake pipes and requiring millions of dollars for treatment. Their microscopic larvae can pass through many screens intended to keep them out. Millions of dollars are being spent annually by Great Lakes cities and industries to unclog intake pipes and prevent further infestation

Lake Rathbun is also one of the Iowa DNR's walleye collection lakes and raises walleyes and channel catfish that are stocked over much of the state. The lake empties into the Chariton River, which is a tributary of the Missouri River.

"It's going to create a lot of headaches in transporting and stocking fish," said Andy Moore, who supervises hatchery operations at the Rathbun Fish Hatchery. Moore said upon discovery, the DNR suspended walleye stocking. He said they will begin treating the water to make sure the hatchery does not transport any zebra mussel or mussel larvae to any other Iowa water body.

"This is an existing treatment that we use at our Fairport Hatchery, but we just don't know the impact it will have on these larger walleye fingerlings," Moore said. It will take about three days to complete the test. The decision on when to resume stocking is pending. "We know the treatment works. But what we are looking for is any delayed fish mortality."

The impact to the lake itself is unclear.

"We don't know if these things have a toe hold yet or not," said Mark Flammang, fisheries management biologist for Lake Rathbun. "We are treating the lake like it does have a zebra mussel population and we are going to do everything we can to ensure that we don't move any mussels from this lake."

An estimated 800,000 people visit Lake Rathbun each year for fishing, water skiing, boating and camping. The lake has a reputation for tremendous walleye, crappie and channel catfish fishing and draws anglers from Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri and Nebraska as well as all over Iowa.

“I hope we dodge this bullet,” Flammang said. “But we won’t know for a few years.”

The incident remains under investigation.

Sidebar: Stopping Spread of Zebra Mussels

With such a mobile society, it will take a constant effort to get the word out to anglers and boaters to help prevent the spread of zebra mussels, said Kim Bogenschutz, aquatic invasive species coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Zebra mussels were first documented in the Mississippi River in Iowa in 1992. There were no reports of zebra mussels from interior waters until 2005 when they were found in Clear Lake. The next example of zebra mussels on the move in Iowa occurred in 2006 when zebra mussels were discovered in Lake Delhi.

Bogenschutz has been working with individual boaters about inspecting their vessels, and will be stepping up her efforts to work with boat dealers and marinas on education.

“For boats that are put in and taken out daily, the critical thing is to drain the live well and other water from the boat, because it would be more likely those vessels would collect veligers in their live well, than have adult mussels attached to their hull,” Bogenschutz said.

She said each time boaters pull their boat from the water, there are a few easy things they can do to protect other water bodies.

- Remove any visible plants, animals, or mud before transporting equipment.
- Drain water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well) before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before transporting to another waterbody either:
Rinse your boat and equipment with hot (104 degree) water; or
Spray your boat and trailer with high-pressure water at a carwash; or
Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.
- Never release plants, fish, or animals into a water body unless they came out of that water body and empty unwanted bait in the trash.

Zebra mussels are one example of an aquatic invasive species that has hitchhiked its way into Iowa. More information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters can be found in the Iowa Fishing Regulations booklet and on line at www.iowadnr.gov/fish then click on Aquatic Nuisance Species in the left hand column under the programs section.

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FOR IOWA'S ARCHERY DEER HUNTERS ---- THE BEST OF THE BEST HAS ARRIVED

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

For archery deer hunters, the best 10 days of the season are at hand. The November rut is has begun, and monster Iowa white-tails are on the prowl.

It's a time like no other. Restless, moody, and itching for a scrap bucks, and lots of them, are currently on the move 24/7. Trophy stags that have been careful to remain invisible all summer now suddenly appear to boldly swagger through mid-day corn stubble. Locked into perpetual search mode, they relentlessly cruise ridgetops, river bottoms, and brushy draws in hopes of finding does. Sometimes, these wandering bucks find rival males instead. When that happens, the Iowa timbers resound with the distinctive clash of dueling antlers.

With the scales suddenly tipped in their favor, archery deer hunters employ every trick in the book in hopes of arousing the curiosity [or anger] of mature bucks. Vigorously rattling a set of antlers to create the sounds of mock battle is the bow hunter's staple. Other tactics include doe [bleat] calls, grunt tube calls, and decoys.

But even now, Iowa's big bucks never come easy. Tagging one still requires ample amounts of scouting, stealth, woodsmanship, and above all --- patience. But when the buck of your dreams finally steps into full view, there is no question that all the work, sleep deprivation, and other personal sacrifices were well worth the effort.

Whether you judge them in terms of body size or in inches of antler growth, there is no denying that Iowa bucks grow to monstrous proportions. True Legends of the Fall, Iowa's behemoth stags have gained global notoriety. There are, in fact, few places on the entire continent where deer grow bigger or better than they do right here at home.

So how big are our deer? To date, Iowa has produced 19 of the all time top bucks ever recorded. That's more top deer than is currently listed by any other state or any Canadian province. During the next several days, the list of records will continue to grow as even more of these eye popping, wall hanging, breath stopping bucks are brought to bag. It's as sure as the sun rising in the east. Iowa **IS** the big buck state.

Who knows? When it finally comes time to capture that photo of a lifetime, it might even be your face grinning from behind the massive antlers of Iowa's next state record white-tail.

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